

# The Mon Forum

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## Some Acronyms in This Issue

SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC-	State Law and Order Restoration Council,
APTD-	Agricultural Products Trade Department,
GONGOs-	Government organized Non-Governmental Organization
IB -	Infantry Battalion ( <i>of Burmese Army</i> ),
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion ( <i>of Burmese Army</i> ),
MOMC-	Military Operational Management Command
PDC-	Peace and Development Council,
USDA-	Union Solidarity and Development Association

## News

### 1400 houses are relocated in Rangoon-Moulmein railway project

(December 2003)

With an insecure promise of full compensation cost to the local town residents, the Mon State township authorities ordered about 1400 houses in three city wards in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, to relocate their houses within one-month period.

The relocation of these households or eviction of city families was implemented by the SPDC authorities after its plan to connect a railway road from Rangoon, the capital of Burma to capital of Mon State.

Moulmein city is situating on a river bank of Salween River and currently the regime builds a bridge across the river, which is called 'Salween Bridge'. After bridge construction, the regime plans to connect the railway road from Rangoon, which reaches on the other side river bank, by constructing via the bridge across the river up to the middle part of the Moulmein city. The railway will end in Myay-ne-gone city ward and the regime will build a terminal station in Myay-ne-gone city ward.

Because of this Rangoon-Moulmein railway project, the civilians who have lived along the route between the 'Salween Bridge' and terminal station were ordered to relocate themselves. The SPDC Mon State



Many good houses were forced to move because of SPDC's Rangoon-Moulmein railway Project

## Terror in Ye and Yebyu Township, Southern Burma

In December 2003, after the visit of the Chief Commander of Southeast Command (of Burmese Army), Lt. Gen. Thura Myint Aung, to the southernmost town of Mon State, Ye, he ordered to uproot all activities of a Mon splinter group which has only about 100 troops.

The Burmese Army brought 10 battalions of troops (which has about 3000 troops) into the areas, Ye Township (in Mon State) and Yebyu Township), where the Mon rebel group has activities, and has launched a serious offensive against the rebels.

Accompanying with this military offensive, the soldiers from Burmese Army have committed various sorts of human rights violations against the villagers in rural areas of Ye Township and Yebyu Township.

Summary execution, arbitrary arrest, sexual violations against women, torture to religious leaders (Buddhist) and villagers, restriction of civilians' livelihoods and forced relocation of villages are committed by the SPDC soldiers since the beginning of December soon after the offensive was launched. It has been more and more serious and inhumane since then.

Thousands of civilians from these two townships have abandoned their villages. Some are displaced while many of them have fled into Thailand. But the ethnic Mon and Tavoyan people are not recognized as 'refugees' in Thailand. Most of them moved into Thailand and sought work.

Human rights record in Burma has not been really improved, although the regime claims the Burma will have peace and reconciliation soon.

authorities set a relocation site, in eastern part of city, to where the relocated families have to go for half an hour.

Two main city wards, Myay-ne-gone and Hlaing, were effected in this project and the residents in city wards were ordered to relocate as quickly as possible.

There are many good houses in the city wards and some house and garden was worth to 10 million Kyat (about 10000 US Dollar) and the authorities promised they would compensate for all costs. Some normal house and garden has worth to 2 million Kyat per one, while many poor house has worth less than 0.5 Million Kyat per one.

The local residents moved from their city wards to the new relocation place in Pat-kin city ward east of the city, because of not only they received the promise of compensation, but also they were afraid of being harassed by the authorities.

Last two years ago, when the SPDC's Mon State authorities planned to build 'Salween Bridge', they forcibly relocate about 100 households in Kyauk-tan city ward without any compensation.

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### **Suffering of villagers under the regime's 'Model Village' program** (December 2003)

Under the Mon State PDC's 'Model Village' and 'Model Town Ward', the civilians in Mon State have to rebuild or decorate their houses and gardens for

similarity and so that many poor villagers in rural villages faced much difficulties.

In December 2003, the authorities in Mon State implemented this program in 2 city wards in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State; two villages in Mudon Township; one village in Kyaikmayaw Township; 2 villages in Ye Township.

In this plan, the Mon State authorities instructed that the villages with more than 1000 households must be created as 'model villages'. In the model villages, the villagers have to reconstruct the roads, schools and clinics in villages with their own fund. Additionally all households in villages are instructed to rebuild their houses or decorate them to be 'standard house' set by the authorities.

The objective of creation of 'Model Village' or 'Model Town Ward' is the regime wish to show and propagandize that the people in Burma is not poor and they could stay in happy life in good houses and proper surrounding of their villages.

Whenever the authorities are planning to create a model, they always order to the villagers that if the families could not repair their houses or decorate their houses, they must move from the villages. Because of this strict order, many poor families in villages face many difficulties. They have to borrow money from the rice people with interests and have to (mostly) rebuild their houses within set dates.

Besides the villagers/ residents in towns were forced to re-build or decorate their houses, they also have to

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## Report

### Militarization policy and human rights violations in northern part of Tenasserim Division

#### SPDC's militarization policy and armed conflict in Tenasserim Division

After May 30 Depeyin incident in upper Burma, the Burma's military regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and Burmese Army also adopted militarization policy and tried to force most men and some women to attend the military training school. After training, they are forced to serve in the regime's newly formed organizations to support the regime and the Burmese Army to stay on in power. This militarization policy deprives the economic rights and also the most affects the rights to life.

Additionally, there have been some military activities launched by the rebel armies especially the troops from Mon splinter group and KNU's armed faction, Karen National Liberation Army (MNLA) in northern part of Tenasserim Division. Since the northern part of Tenasserim Division has multinational corporate's investments especially a Yatana gas pipeline, which is 65 miles long on-shore and operated by gas and oil companies: Total (France), UNOCAL (United States) and the regime's Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE). By collaborating with the regime's MOGE, the multinational oil and gas companies sell gas to Thailand. This pipeline provides regime 400 Million US Dollar per year.

The Burmese Army has the main role of protecting the gas pipeline and so that they have deployed more troops in the area since after the gas pipeline is constructed. The regime and Burmese Army has serious concern for the possible sabotage made by the rebel soldiers. Even they have tried to uproot all activities of rebel armies in area and have threatened the local villagers by mistreating them to not support the rebel armies in the area.

The military offensives against these rebel troops has still continued and the mis-treatment against the local civilians still has taken places in various rural villages. Additionally, under the SPDC's new militarization policy, the local battalions of Burmese Army have forced hundreds of men and women to attend military training school on a rotation basis and have tried to put all civilians under their military commands. SPDC's militarization policy and compulsory military training have taken place in various parts of the country, including in the areas close to border. Civilians in Tanasserim Division have been seriously suffered under this policy.

On the other hand, to keep the most area in firm control and protect foreign invasions, the Burmese Army deployed more troops in Tenasserim Division, Southern Burma. The Burmese Army also brings in the troops from other parts (not from Tenasserim Division and Mon State) of Burma and exchanged these troops often to use all troops from non-war zones to involve in military offensives in Tenasserim Division.

#### The Command of Burmese Army

After the Chief Commander of Southeast Command visited to Ye Town in late November 2003 for an opening ceremony of a new bridge building, he found that the Mon splinter group has launched military activities against the Burmese Army. In the meeting with the local village headmen in southern part of Ye Township, he warned them that they must not support the splinter group. If the Burmese Army know the villagers are supporting the rebels they must be punished.

After the official meeting, Chief Commander deployed 5 battalions under the command of No. 3 Tactical Command in southern part of Ye Township in Mon State. Then at the same time, he informed to Chief Commander of Coastal Region Command bases in Mergui, the capital of Tenasserim Division to deploy troops in northern part of Tenasserim especially in Yebyu Township.

Therefore, since one December 10, the two Regional Command have launched joint-operation in offensives against the 100 troops strong Mon splinter group. Southeast Command took responsibility in offensives in Mon State and Coastal Region Command took responsibility in offensives in Tenasserim Division.

In southern part of Ye Township, Southeast Command supervised 'No. 3 Tactical Command' led by Col. Myo Win and 5 battalions: IB No. 31, IB No. 97, IB No. 61, LIB No. 591 and LIB No. 586 involve in this

command. Coastal Region Command sent LIB No. 341, LIB No. 282, LIB No. 273, LIB No. 408 and LIB No. 409 to launch offensives against the Burmese Army.

Even the fighting was not happening so often, as the splinter group planned to avoid the fighting due to their weak strengths, the local villagers in both townships has been suffered much.

The following accounts are facts from northern part of Tenasserim Division: Yebyu Township, Palaw Township and Thayet-chaung Township: how the Burmese Army has involved in the implementation of 'militarization policy, human rights violations against the local civilians, suffering of the local communities because of militarization policy and human rights violations.

In Tenasserim Division, there are Mon, Karen and Tavoyan ethnic people living and these all local inhabitants have similarly suffered from militarization policy and human rights violations.

## **Compulsory military training and forced labour**

SPDC and the Burmese Army has propagandized among the civilians in the rural areas that there could be foreign invasions to Burma, after the killing of pro-democracy activists in Depayin in upper Burma, and so that all citizens in Burma must know the tactics of using guns and defending the national sovereignty. Under this slogan, the Burmese Army has adopted a policy of 'militarization' to all civilians especially to non-Burman ethnic civilians, who stay close to Thailand-Burma border (see in the area in the map).

According to the propaganda released by SPDC and the Burmese Army, American led foreign invaders would come to occupy Burma via Thailand-Burma border and therefore, the people in Burma need to prepare to save the country to not fall into the hands of the imperialists.

In the implementation of 'militarization' policy, the Burmese Army especially operates the military training schools in almost town wards and village tracts. HURFOM's human rights workers collected information on SPDC's military training school in three Townships in northern part of Tenasserim Division, they found the civilians are forced (not voluntarily) to attend these training schools.

### **An instance is:**

On 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2003, No. LIB No. 282 of Coastal Command, stationed at Three pagoda Village nearby Natkyizin Village, Kalein-aung Sub-Township of Yebyu Township compulsorily made the villagers of 60 households villages attend the military training given at the battalion.

Compulsorily, the villagers were taken into training with a batch of 20 recruits per week. "If a household could not participate in the training because of having no time, 2,000 kyat must be given to the battalion for substitution of attendance, and otherwise, the absentee, according to the order of LIB No. 282, no longer would be allowed to live in the village", said by a villager.

He also added, "for so-called village development funds, from every household, the money from 200 or 400 kyat to 2,000 or 4,000 kyat is frequently extorted. And, occasionally, the villagers are taken as porters, and especially the households that cannot give money the military demands are enlisted for porter age right away. There no longer is anything for a livelihood. All of the earnings are prone to be given to them (the military). Not having anything to eat, many people of our village had fled to other villages nearby. Even the people of Ywa-ngan-gyi, nearby our village had run away to somewhere secured. Moreover, we are being compulsorily posted as guards on the gas-pipe line. We are in a tight corner."

That is the explanation of a villager in anonymity from Phaya-thon-zu village, Yebyu Township, who fled to Thai-Burma border area.

It is publicly known that due to compulsory military training, collecting various sorts of extortion money, porter service and conscripting the villagers as guards on the gas-pipeline committed by the alleged LIB No. 282 under the Coastal Command, stationed at Phaya-thon-zu village, Kalein-aung Sub-township of Yebyu Township, it is not possible for the local people to live further at their villages and many families including house-wives and children fled to secured area of the border region under the control of ethnic rebels.

"We do not want to be killed, but to seek a livelihood in that neighbouring country (Thailand) and look after my children", a man who fled from Yebyu Township said.

After the continuous days of training schools, the civilians could no longer tolerate because they have lost their works or livelihood and regular income. After those villagers lost their income and livelihood, they

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tried to flee from their villages. The civilians in Tenasserim Division are not only forced to be trainees in the training school, many of them are also forced to work in the army bases. Therefore, as the civilians are too busy for the army and some of them fled from their village to escape these works.

**The instance of escapees from the villages is:**

On 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2003, LIB No. 282 imposed forced labour on the villagers of over 200 households village, Nat-kyi-zin, Ka-lein-aung Sub-Township, Yebyu Township, and conscripted the villagers as security guards wherever the military encamped. On the other hand, as the people could not stand the compulsory military training and training expense, and so increasingly fled to secured area of Thai-Burma Border.

“Forced Labour was imposed on three wards of the village (i.e. eastern ward, western ward and new ward), and so 9 persons per day with three persons from each of three wards. For military training and militia 30 people are needed monthly, with the rate of 10 persons per ward. Every person has to pay for his expense in training. The people who cannot attend the training must give 2,000 Kyat fine to the battalion. As the village has over 200 households only, the training was being instructed to attend in rotation. If training is neither attended nor fine given, there is no right to live in the village anymore according to the order of the military,” a villager of Nat-kyi-zin explained.

He continued to explain that as the women and some elderly people were forced to fetch water, collect fire-woods and cook meals, and taken as porters from village to village where the military column patrolled, the villagers had no time to extinguish their stomach heat (i.e to scrape a living) and could not able to give multiple extortion money. Therefore, the result is that the people who left their native place and fled to the border are increasing more and more.

Accompanying with the military training school, the battalions of Burmese Army also collected ‘defense expense’ for foods in training schools and for their soldiers, who launched the military activities in the area. The villagers have to serve for all of these costs.

**As an instance,**

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003, the local battalion, IB No. 101 stationed in Pa-law Township, Mergui District was compulsorily sending for the villagers of all villages in the township to attend the military training in rotation and increasingly extorting “defense expenses”. In addition that wherever the military column moved from village to village, the using of porters became to increase more than before.

“We do not have any interest in that basic military training. I don’t believe it can be useful at anywhere. We would be pleased, if our family can live a peacefully. Now, there is not any way to seek earning due to their abuses, and we have to give money whenever they demand. I have a lot of debts piled up to be repaid. How can I repay them back with nothing even to be eaten?” a villager of 55 years who had followed the military column as a porter said in condition of anonymity.

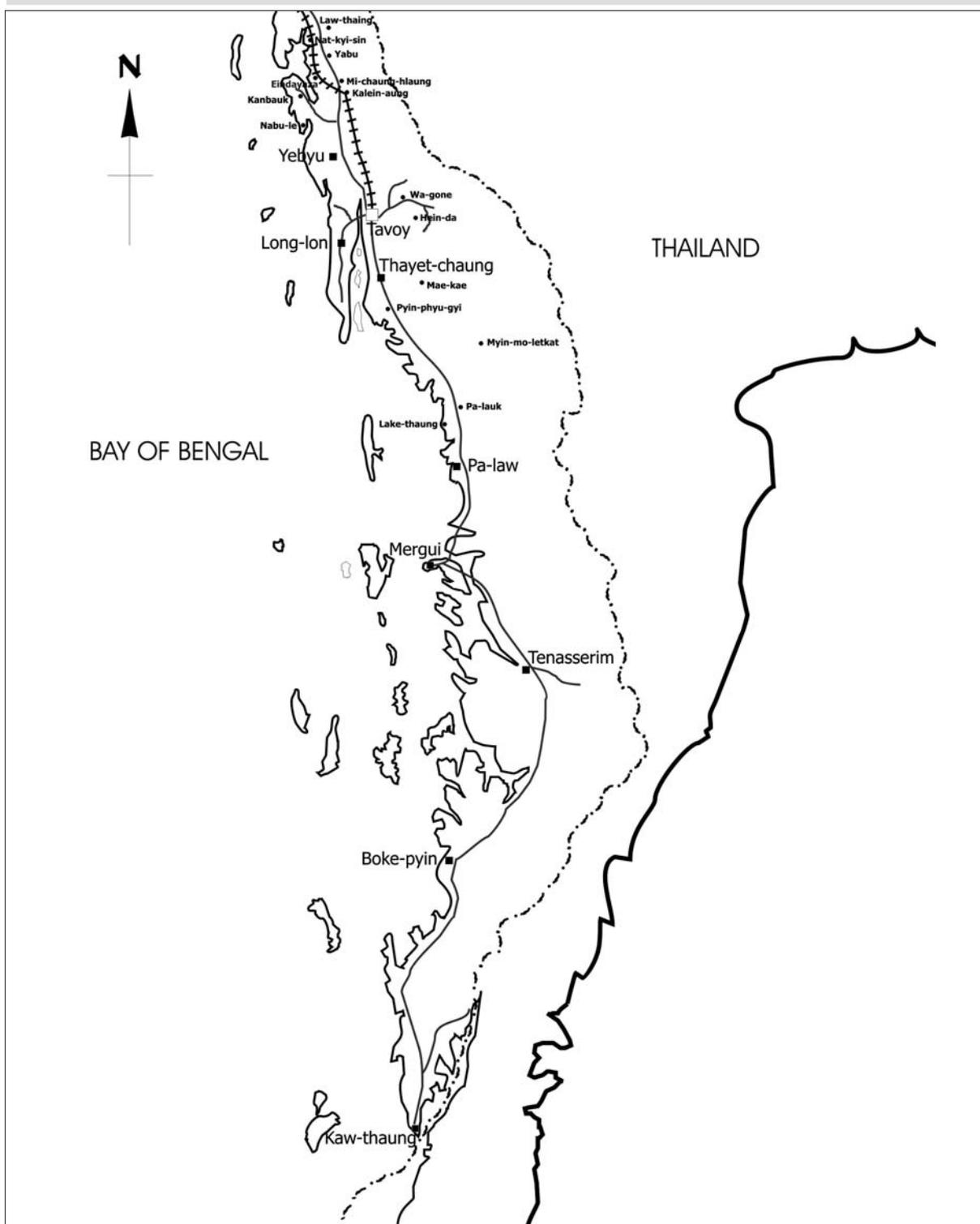
Similarly, on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 408<sup>th</sup> LIB stationed in Yebyu Township ordered not only young women but also elderly people to give unpaid labour at the battalion owned farms cultivated in Nhan-gye and Ta-lone-htar villages, Yebyu Township.

After fleeing to Halockhani Mon refugees resettlement camp together with his family.

A villager of Nhan-gye who had been forced to give unpaid labour said, “at first, the soldiers themselves worked holding hoes and spades. After one or two days, the military sent for the villagers with one person from each household through village head. We had to feed ourselves during forced labour. The days for forced labour was not only one or two days, and we no longer could not endure it. On the other hand, the military training had to be attended according to their will. After we had given multiple extortion money, nothing remained for eating. Therefore, we have come here”.

Generally, the militarization policy is also one type of ‘forced labour’ because the civilians have to go and attend training involuntarily. Under the instruction of the Burmese Army, the local Township authorities and village leaders collected all names of villagers, who are between 18 and 45 years old and forced them to attend training schools group by group.

Over 50% of the population in the rural communities in this range of age and they have to attend training schools without any denial. When the civilians are forced to attend these schools, they have to bring their own money or foods to take during training days.



Location Map of Tenasserim Division

Besides the compulsory military training school, the civilians also suffered from the constant conscription of porters to carry ammunitions and food supplies along with the Burmese soldiers during their military operation. For example, in one village, while many men were forced to attend the training school, the remaining men were conscripted to be porters for the military operations.

**As an instance,**

Starting from 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2003, as SPDC's coastal based LIB No. 282 called weekly military training and took porters whenever they needed, at Ye-ngan-gyi village, Ka-lein-aung Sub-township, Yebu Township, the local people are increasingly fleeing their village.

At Ye-ngan-gyi vllage, which has over 40 households only, a batch of 4 persons a week had to attend military training and each household had to give 300 to 600 kyat for the expense of military column.

“If the military column patrols in the area, the village regularly had to provide 10 to 12 porters. Every week, the military training also had to attend unwillingly while this and that extortion money are collected. When would we have time to earn for livelihoods. I no longer could not think what to do and eventually I had decided to come here,” a man who fled to Thai-Burma border explained his experience in condition of anonymity.

Similarly, due to weekly compulsory military training, collecting the expenses of military column, and regular porters, the people from Chattaw and Sin-zwe villages near by Ye-ngan-gyi village each of which has about 65 households only, no longer could not live in their villages and they are increasingly fleeing to Thai-Burma border area.

Conscription of ‘porters’ during the offensives in frontlines along with Burmese Army is a serious violation of labour right. Most of these porters did not receive any payment for their labour and they have to travel along with soldiers in dangerous situation of gun fighting and in the routes with land-mines. At the same time, they have to carry 20-30 Kilograms load for the soldiers, climb various mountains, cross river and walk under rain. After the completion of the porter service, if they survived, many of them fled from their villages to escape for further porter service.

In the militarization policy, the Burmese Army has planned in deploying many military bases and outposts near many villages in northern part of Tenasserim Division. Whenever the Burmese Army deployed bases, they claimed that they need to protect the foreign enemies and then forced the local villagers to contribute labour for the construction of outposts and guard the surrounding near bases or outposts.

**As an instance,**

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003, Long Lon based IB No. 104 troops ordered the villagers of all the villages located on the motor road between Long-lon and Kyauk-ni-maw to build outpost solidly at the entrance and exit of every villages with unpaid labour of villagers, and take night guard duties.

“We had merely to do sentry duties as they ordered. Even up to now, I do not know yet what has to be guard against. Against thieves and bandits? or against foreign enemies? If against thieves and bandits, it is not needed to build as solidly as thus. If against foreign enemies, those trenches will be useless. Foreign military powers are very enormous and such deployment of defense is like a palm leaf that is to be used to protect against thunderbolt. Useless thing!” said an anonymous villager from Kyauk-ni-maw who had taken guard duty said his comment.

Most conscription of forced labour always related to the implementation of ‘militarization policy’ by the SPDC via the local battalions of Burmese Army. To help implementing this policy, the Burmese Army has brought thousand number of troops from other part of Burma, Arakan State and middle part of the country.

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## Gross Human Rights Violations

### I. Summary Execution

Most parts of Tenasserim Division is still declared as ‘black area’ (free fire zones) in Burmese term, which means the troops of Burmese Army have full authority to kill anyone in the area without trial. The local community’s people are totally under the accusation of ‘rebels’ or ‘rebel-supporters’ and if the Burmese soldiers suspected someone is a rebel or a rebel-supporter, they can kill him/her any time.

During the courses of 5 decades long civil war in Burma, hundreds of village civilians were killed by the soldiers with this accusation. Almost the accusations have no strong evidence for killing. Generally, the farmers who stayed at their farms or who came back from farms to villages at evening time suffered from this type of killing. When the patrol troops faced them on road, they shot at them and killed them without questioning.

Such arbitrary killing also happened in southern part of Mon State in 2002 and 2003. Unsurprisingly, such killing of innocent villagers also happened in northern part of Tenasserim Division, where the Burmese Army is launching military offensives.

**As an instance,**

On November 8, 2003, an innocent villager was shot dead by LIB No. 273’s soldiers, which was under the command of Coastal Region Command based at Nat-kyi-zin village at that time.

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The victim, Maung Thike, 28, was son of U Yan Aye and Daw Ngwe Kyi of Nat-kyi-zin village. While he was returning home together with his friends from a funeral house of western ward of the village, a patrolling unit of LIB No. 273 shot him dead without prior questioning to them.

“The event happened in front of me. They didn’t say anything why they shot at him. The soldier who shot said the victim should be shot beyond death. I actually felt bullied. As it happened in front of me my heart is being hurt. Though the responsible military officers were complained to of the case, they didn’t care about it. They didn’t even give money for funeral expense and punish the soldier who committed murder”, a militiaman of Nat-kyi-zin village revealed his feeling.

In some areas, the Burmese Army’s local battalions also adopted movement restriction against the civilians and has stopped the villagers, fishermen and farmers to not to their farms or workplaces. For villagers or farmers or fishermen, if they lost opportunity to do their daily livelihood, they could face food-shortage and so that some of them decided to work in their farms or other workplaces which were outside of the villages. When the soldiers found them they are accused as ‘rebels’ and so the soldiers executed them without more inquiries.

The troops of Burmese Army always believe that the local farmers are key persons in supporting the rebels in terms of foods and shelters. Whenever they found those farmers, they always interrogate where is the rebel soldiers, and how much they know about the activities of the rebels. If the farmers refused and said they ‘didn’t know’, they are still tortured, and if they said ‘yes’, the soldiers will bring them along with military operations to show the bases of the rebels. If they could not show, they could be tortured or killed.

## II. Kidnapping and Torture

The salary of a soldier in Burmese Army is just about 5000 Kyat (5 US Dollar) per month, and it is normally insufficient for their expenses. For those who already married face more difficult situation because they have no extra income like their senior commanders did. Thus, extortion and looting from the civilians in the rural areas are the common abuses committed by the Burmese Army.

For many troops of Burmese Army in Tenasserim Division or ‘black areas’, they have been more involved in looting and extortion. Later, as there was no punishable action against these looting and extortion, the soldiers of Burmese Army then have increasingly involved in kidnapping the villagers and demand ransom from them.

The soldiers normally took money from the hostages and released them. They use the money for their personal purposes and for their battalion purposes.

### **As an instance of LIB No. 282 of Coastal Command committed kidnapping, and demanded money through beating the hostages:**

On 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2003, a Burmese Army’s patrol unit, LIB No. 282 led by Maj. Ba Lay, that was taking responsibility for the security of railway and gas pipeline, kidnapped two spouses, the garden owners from Nat-kyi-zin village. Then the kidnappers demanded ransom through beating the hostages.

“At that night I was patrolling in the village. At that time, three or four soldiers took our guns back. On the next day, it was heard that U Pha Khu, 41, and Daw Kan Kyi, 50, from the western ward of the village were kidnapped, beaten and demanded ransom by the military. The released hostages did not say how much money they had given. But they explained that the military took them from their garden and when they arrived at the cemetery, the blind-folds were removed, then their faces struck with fists, and their bodies kicked with jungle-boots being threatened that they would be released if only ransom was given” explained a militiaman in condition of anonymity.

According to the information that came from Nat-kyi-zin and other villages nearby, the alleged LIB No. 282 under the Coastal Regional Command, if being unnoticed, during patrolling, frequently arrested the villagers regarded to be the haves as hostages, beat them inhumanly and demanded excessive money.

The local villagers are always accusing the soldiers of Burmese Army as ‘robbers came from cities’, and instead they are needing to keep law and order in the country, but they have constantly involved creating lawlessness.

In some cases, the villagers are also tortured by soldiers, if they failed to provide necessary things that the army commanders requested. In November and December 2003, when LIB No. 341 launched the military offensives in the border area between Mon State and Tenasserim Division, they have asked cooking oil, fruits

and paddy from the villagers. The soldiers also set the dates to send these things and if the villagers failed to send on the set date, they would be seriously tortured.

**Accordingly to a villager from Kwethalin village,**

“The troops of Burmese Army from LIB No. 341 arrived to our village, they asked every household to give them with one viss (about 1.5 kilograms in weight) of cooking oil. They set three days to give them in their (temporary) base. If someone failed to give them on the set dates, the soldiers will put them under sun heat hours.

“Many hand-to-mouth families could not find Kyat 2500 immediately to buy one-viss of cooking oil for army. Hence, after the deadline, four villagers were put under sun heat at day times for over 6 hours as punishment. The soldiers brought them to the village’s football field, put them under sun heat for over 6 hours. It was too hot in day-time. Even after they put them under sun heat, they told the villagers to pay them 2500 Kyat in cash as quick as possible.

Most types of torture happened during the civilians are forced to be porters for the Burmese Army. While the civilian porters have to carry a heavy load of ammunitions or food supplies, they are also beaten, kicked to walk quick.

### **3. Sexual Assaults against Women**

In the recent military offensives in both northern part of Tenasserim Division and southern Mon State, the troops of Burmese Army have used women as a tool to win the war. In threatening the villagers to stop supporting the rebels longer, their relative women would be suffered.

About 10 military battalions that operate the operations in Ye Township (southern Mon State) and Yebyu Township (northern Tenasserim Division) have asked women to do works in their bases, entertain the commanders and sleep with them. Mostly the commanders have asked both married and unmarried women to do these things.

Normally, when the troops arrived into village, they arrested village headmen or village leaders and instructed them to bring women every night to them. If the headmen did not follow accordingly to their instruction, they would be tortured.

According to a villager from Ah-sat village, Yebyu Township, he said,

“In early of December, the troops from LIB No. 341 arrived to our village. They took base in village and ask three women per night to cook, entertain and sleep with them. The commander (*he did not know the name*) is so notorious and he asked three women to come every night. After they took base, they closed the whole village and did not allow any villager to go outside of their villages.

“When the women arrived to their bases, all of them need to say that they (even married women) did not have husbands and are unmarried. Then, the commanders forced them to sing and dance in front of him. If they refused, he also raped them or tortured them as they liked. They have to stay with commanders in the whole night: from 6 o’clock to 6 o’clock in the morning.”

This is how the Burmese Army have used the local married and unmarried women as ‘comfort women’ in the area. However, many women who suffered from these sexual abuses always kept silence and not dare to talk to other people because of ashamed. In most situations, they community people also do not have any program or culture to help these women.

Not only one or two battalions have been involved in sexual assaults, almost all of battalions have committed ‘sexual assaults against women’ systematically. We have found that the battalions, which take bases in both Mon State and Tenasserim Division, have at the same time asked women to stay at night with them.

**Another instance is:**

By giving reason for so-called village security, LIB No. 282 under command of Coastal Region Command that is taking responsibility for the security of railway and gas-pipe line is forcedly posting not only men but also women as night sentries at Sin-gone, Pyin-gyi and nearby villages.

A group of young men who fled Sin-gone and Pyin-gyi villages to Thai-Burma border intending to work as illegal workers explained their experiences in condition of anonymity as followed:

“Sin-gone village has about 200 households. Through the village heads, ordered not only men but also women to take sentry duties. According to the military’s order, women of Sin-gone and Pyin-gyi

villages have to take guard duties in rotation from 6 p.m. to the next day's 6 a.m. If they could not performance and duty substitution should be made. The so-called "defense expense" must be paid from at least 2,000 kyat to 3,000, 6,000, 8,000 or 12,000 Kyat. It means the men must attend the military training and the women take night guard duties. Anyone who disobeyed must be expelled from the village by order. All these excessivenesses were practically implemented by the village heads under the rein of military. Though that the women were being recruited as sentries is morally awful, nobody dare to say. Not being able stand those awful things, we, as you see, have come here to take refuge and seek livelihoods."

According to the locally wide spread news, it is learnt that the women recruited as guards were more vulnerable to be sexually abused and due to local peoples' sense of shame, there were few women who dare complain of being sexually abused though the military had done a lot.

#### **4. Looting and Extortion**

As the troops of Burmese Army have believed all civilians in the rural areas of Tenasserim Division are the supporters to rebel-supporters in providing foods and information, the soldiers have tried to cut off all supplies from the civilians to rebel soldiers. In this case, whenever the soldiers came into a village, they confiscated all foods and fruits in there.

They have not only looted rice/paddy, but have also taken other things, from which the villagers could make money and buy foods. The looting of civilians' foods happened in Ye Township in Mon State; and Yebyu Township, Tha-yet-chaung Township, and Palaw Township in Tenasserim Division.

**As an instance,**

On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2003, company officer level commanders of LIB No. 404 military column that encamped at The-chaung-gyi village, Taung-byout village tract, Tha-yet-chaung Township extorted grain, fruits and other foods from the people of villages including Thae-chaung-gyi, 38 miles away from Tavoy, and other villages, Kywe-gone, Win-ka-paw, Tha-byu, Chaung-kaut, Kyauk-ai, Mae-ke, Ye-byat, Yebu, Taung-byout, Ah-le-su and Byat-wie-thar.

"Not only taking fruits and grain but also chicken and pigs were shot and eaten. Also arriving the villages, they extorted timber form the sawyers demanding how many cubic tons of timber be supported for the new battalion. Formerly, IB No. 25 also had done so. Whenever a new battalion arrives a new extortion happens. As we do not dare say anything, we have only to give and do whatever they demand," a garden owner of The-chaung-gyi village expresses his grievances.

Some looting are also relating to the battalion's or personal business of the commanders. The commanders of the troops forced the villagers to give them rice/paddy, fruits such as betel-nut, line, and orange that produced in the area, and then those commanders sold them in town's markets.

**As an instance,**

In the first week of December 2003, when the troops from LIB No. 341 under the command of the Coastal Region Command patrolled in the border area between Tenasserim Division and Mon State, the commander of the battalion has asked one viss (about 1.5 kilograms in weight) of cooking oil from every household in the village. The cost for one viss of cooking oil is about Kyat 2500 and all families in the village had to buy for soldiers. Some very poor villagers had to sell their belonging at homes and bought cooking for soldiers, if not they could be punished.

The commander collected many visses of cooking oil, but it is not for their own battalion's use and did not give to the soldiers' families. They sent all of these cooking oil to markets in town nearby and sold them all.

About 400 households in the area, have to provide cooking oil to the commander and so that he received about Kyat 100, 000 after selling that oil. Besides cooking oils, the commander also asked a betel-nut (one type of fruit for chewing) from the gardeners who belonged that type of fruits. And they also asked 120 baskets of paddy per village from 10 villages in the area and even re-sell it to farmers. Nobody know whether the commander would use money for battalion's purpose or for his own.

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### Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- To monitor human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas southern part of Burma,
- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM has produced "The Mon Forum" newsletters monthly and sometimes it has been delayed because we wait to confirm some information. We apologize for the delay.

However, we also invite your feedbacks on the information we described in each newsletter and if you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter, please send name and address to our address or e-mail as below:

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Webpages: www.geocities.com/monforum2003

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

## 5. Movement restriction

When the Burmese Army's battalions were launching military offensives against the rebels in the rural areas, they have not allowed any farmers to stay at their farms or plantations. In Yebyu Township of Tenasserim Division, some villagers belonged rice growing farms and some belonged fruit or rubber plantations. Most of their farms and plantations are far from their homes and the farmers had to travel to these places by walking.

As it takes time to walk back and forth, most farmers preferred to stay at their farms, and they would not come back to the villages if it is not necessary. If the farmers stay at their farms, they could do more work because they did not have to waste their times for walking. Therefore, the Burmese Army accused the farmers that they were supporting the rebel soldiers during they were in farms or plantations. The commanders and soldiers of Burmese Army believed that if the rebel soldiers came and asked for foods, the farmers had to provide them foods.

Because of this belief, the Burmese Army's battalions in Tenasserim Division have attempted to cut off all possible food supplies to the rebels. In fact, the Burmese Army has stopped the local farmers to not stay in their farms or plantations at night time, which means the farmers have to leave early morning and return their homes in the evening. They are allowed to go their farms only between 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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provide money to build schools, hospitals/ clinics, roads in villages and sometimes water reservoir. The villagers are also forced to build 'brick wall' in front of their houses. Most roads in village are ordered to tar and so that the villagers have to pay more.

For all infrastructures, the villagers have to do in 'self-help' situation, they have to pay money for every thing. The villagers have to pay about 20000-50000 Kyat per household to the village/township authorities for these infrastructures. If compared with Town residents, the villagers have to pay more because there are incomplete infrastructure.

"The villagers are facing troubles. Many poor family could not afford to rebuild their houses. So that some villagers left from village, but some have to borrow money from rich families with high interests. Many people are disappointed", said a villager from Hneepadaw village in Mudon Township.

In Mon State, there are many villages over 1000 households and the population are crowded. While many young Mon villagers unemployed and left to their neighbouring countries to seek works and send money back to their families for survival in villages. However, most families have to pay money to the authorities for various reasons including creation of model village.

According to a farmer from Legyi village,

The commander from LIB No. 273 said that if we go and work in our farms, we have to ask permission from him. To get permission for one week we had to pay him 450 Kyat. But we cannot sleep at our farms. We need to return back before 6 o'clock evening. Even we made the permission letter, sometimes we could go only day and the commander ordered they would not allow anyone to get out of the village. Then on the next week if we wanted to go to farms, we had to make a permission letter.



Farmers in harvest season: Now many farmers in Yebyu Township are not allowed to go to their farms.

Even the farmers are allowed to go and work in their farms at daytime, but they need to have travel permission by the Burmese Army or village headmen. If they were working in their farms or plantations without permission, it can be dangerous because the soldiers of Burmese Army kill them anytime.

### Conclusion

Since the beginning of December after the Burmese Army launched offensives against the Mon splinter group, the villagers who lived in various villages in Yebyu Township have been gradually fled from their native villages to escape from forced labour, taxation, extortion and sexual assault.

Even the small armed group, the Burmese Army has great and serious concern and tried to uproot their activities, however, this group avoid to have fighting and so the Burmese Army could not find them. But the local villagers are suffered of revenge instead of the rebels.

In this re-newed offensives, the Burmese Army have used many women as guards for gas pipeline and has sexually abused them. This is a new threatening way to the villagers. They created a 'fear' among the civilians and then they do not dare to support the rebels in the future.

As a result of militarization policy and human rights violations, the civilians face lack of security in their own areas, are treated inhumanely and at the end they have to abandon their homes, lands and properties in their villages.

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